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AUTHOR Lange, Jenny; Zieher, Connie

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ABSTRACT

The manual is intended to provide suggestions for play to parents of young children with exceptional educational needs. Nineteen types of activities are described and pictured, including make believe with boxes, dress-up activities, kitchen play, bubbles, small motor activities using beans and buttons, use of throw-away materials, painting, activities with paper, stringing activities, coloring, tactile play, rhythm and music, play dough, water and sandplay, and outdoor activities. The final page presents suggestions for setting the stage for play (with information on play areas, materials, and clean up). (CL)

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AN INVITATION TO PLAY

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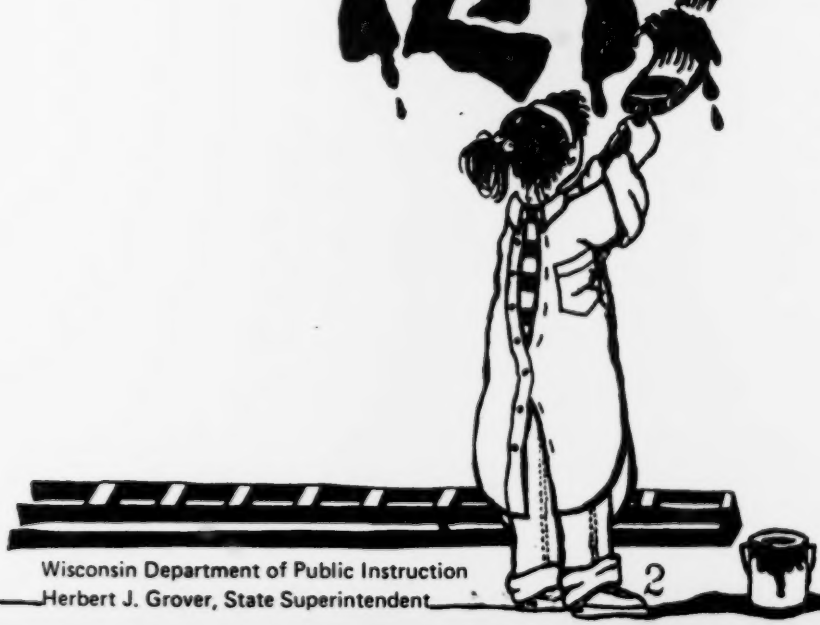

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EC 181721

An Invitation To Play

This is a booklet for parents of young children with exceptional educational needs. It was developed through a state implementation grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Herbert J. Grover, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Victor J. Contrucci, Assistant Superintendent
Division for Handicapped Children and Pupil Services

WISCONSIN STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD:
EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION NEEDS PROJECT

Jenny Lange
Jim McCoy
Connie Zieher
Holly Dungan

Written and Complied by: Jenny Lange, EC:EEN Supervisor
Connie Zieher, EC:EEN Project Co-Coordinator

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Millie Bouche	Sara Holzman	Sue Marsden	Kim Stevens
Regina Brayer	Kay Ironside	Lynn Matysiak	Sandy Tully
Mary Bross	Debbie Jones	Jean Miels	Rita Wagner
Lucinda Brye	Kathie Kellner	Susanne Nelson	Frances Wheeler
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AN INVITATION TO PLAY

Who's Invited: Anyone who wants to share a moment and make some special memories.

When: Whenever you can <u>make</u> the time to set the stage or even join in the fun.

Where: Anyplace that allows you and your child the space to HAVE FUN!

It is our hope these activities will encourage you to find the many ways to share the precious time you have with your child in these short and wonderful preschool years. Explore the many possibilities and have some fun along the way!

COME PLAY WITH US!

CONTENTS

Come On In 1

My Very Own Place 2

Make Believe With Boxes 3

Dressing Up 4

Kitchen Play 5

Round 'N Round It Goes 6

Bubblin' Bubbles 7

Beads 'N Beans 'N Buttons 'N Bolts 8

Throw-Aways or Play-Aways 9

Pic' A Paint and Paint A Pic' 10

Paper Capers 11

Stringing Along With Me 12

Color My World 13

Feelies 14

Rock, Roll, 'N Romp 15

Pat-A-Cake 16

Splish-Splashin' Away 17

Sandscape 18

Exploring The Great Outdoors 19

Setting The Stage For Play 20

Come on in... **Take a Peek...**

You'll want to stay and play!

My Very Own Place

A blanket over a clothesline, an empty box, or a sheet over a table can provide a little "niche" where children can play on their own. It's fun to have a safe little place to be alone with a favorite toy or to go on a pretend camping trip.

If you're lucky, you might be invited in. A guest who remembers to bring a snack for the owner of the hideaway will probably be welcomed with open arms.

Make Believe With Boxes

Enter the world of make believe where a cardboard box can become a truck, a train, or a bus. With a few modifications, the box can be transformed into a tunnel, puppet stage or animal cage. Your child can push, pull, or build with cardboard boxes, both indoors and outoors.

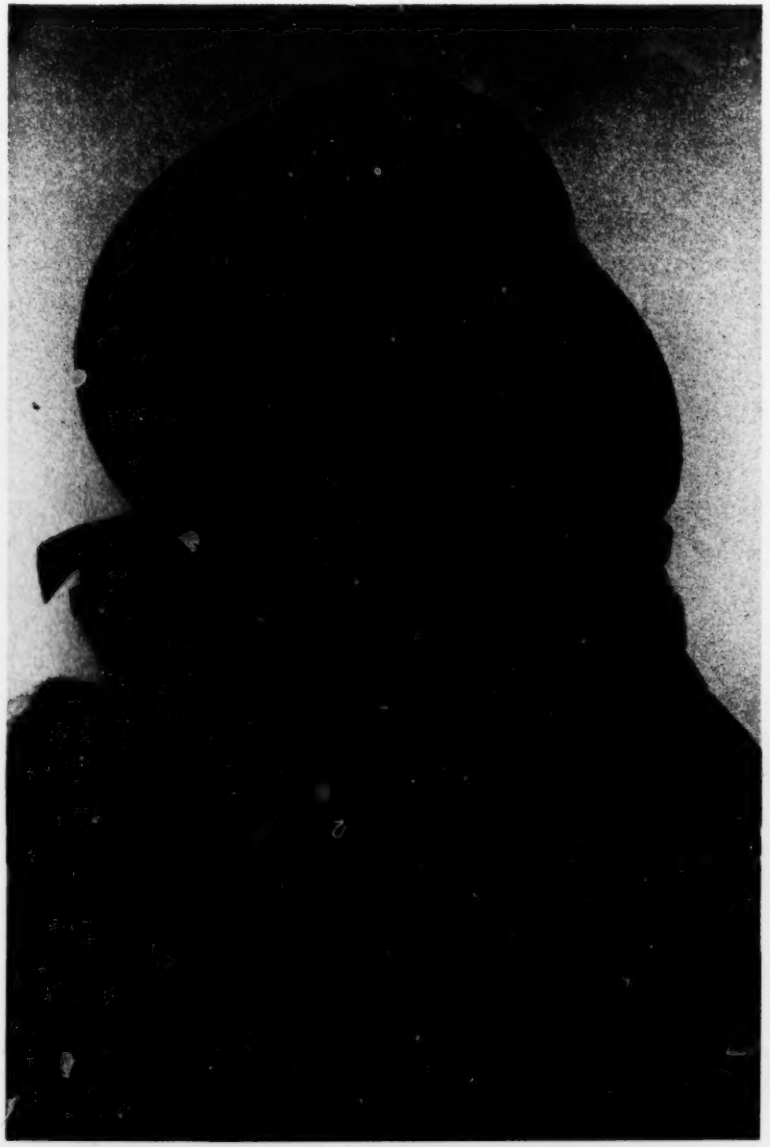
Remember to pick up a few boxes at the grocery store and let your child use his or her imagination. If you have enough boxes, each child can have his or her own private "house" and can decorate it as he or she wishes.

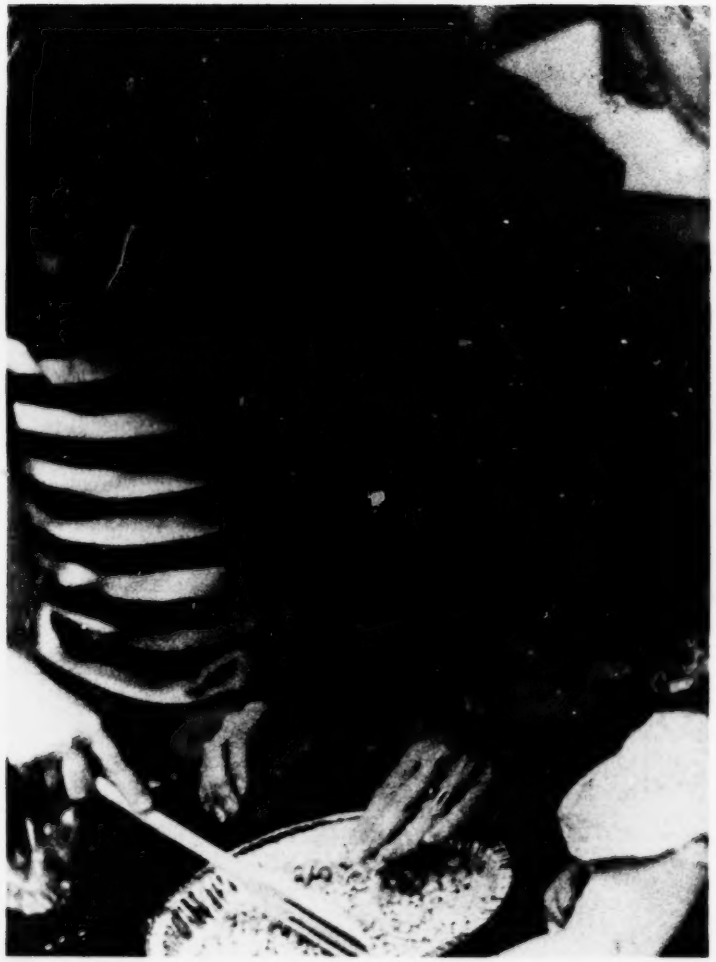
If a box is destined to become a television, help your child cut out a "picture tube" and supply some aluminum foil to make the antenna. Later, the box might become a spaceship, and your living room the planet Mars!

Dressing Up

STOP! Don't give all those closet rejects away. Set aside a few old clothes and pieces of jewelry that your child can use. Keep them in a special box or drawer that is easy to reach. At first, your child may just enjoy playing with a big hat in "peek-a-boo" fashion or trying on a string of beads. (A mirror will double the fun.)

A hat, a worn totebag, and an old vest can transform your child into a telephone repairperson, mail carrier, office clerk, or anyone else he or she wants to be. Provide a few props and encourage your child to enter the world of make believe.





Kitchen Play

Hear the kettles banging? Smell the cheese sauce? Feel the heat from the steaming macaroni?

The kitchen is a great place to learn about the five senses. There are inexpensive playthings in every cupboard: a wooden spoon, a plastic bowl, and a set of measuring cups are great fun for your child. Keep a box of those unbreakable items in the corner or under a table for his or her private collection.

Let your child help by filling, emptying, stirring, shaking, and of course, tasting the final product. Then, do simple clean up jobs together such as wrapping up leftovers in aluminum foil. Remember to save the empty containers for your child's "stash" of kitchen tools.

Round N' Round It Goes

Give your child different kinds of balls. Watch how he or she reaches, grasps, bats, throws, rolls, bounces, and even kicks them through the air. You can change ball play by providing a board for a slope, a container for a basket, or an empty milk carton for a target. The interesting thing about this toy is that, just like your child, it never stays where you leave it!

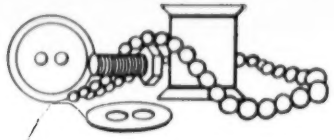
Bubblin' Bubbles

POP! Liquid dish soap and a little water can provide hours of enjoyment for your child. Bubbles are fun to chase and catch with hands . . . or pop with feet!

Blow them high up to the sky or down to the ground. Blow big or little bubbles, many or just a few! Talk about size, shape, and direction.

On a windy day, watch them fly away . . . or try to catch them!

Beans N' Beads N' Buttons N' Bolts



Picking up beans, stacking checkers, sorting and matching beads or twisting a nut on a bolt are all great activities to help children develop control over their fingers.

Also, try playing simple games with these items like "button-toss," "find one like mine," or "hide the penny." Let children experiment, but be sure to stay close by in case a button finds its way into your child's mouth ... and turns into a "belly button."

Throw-Aways Or Play-Aways

Save egg cartons - they're great for sorting; wipe out coffee cans - they make great drums or banks; and don't throw out paper towel tubes - they're really a telescope in need of a pirate.

Many of the food items and paper products you purchase come in small packages and containers that children can use for play. They can stack, sort, store, fill, and empty these items to their hearts' delight. Since they are throw-aways, no one cares if they get played-away instead.

Salt and Flour Fingerpaint

1 cup flour
1½ cup salt
1 cup cold water
1 drop liquid dish soap
Food coloring or powdered paint
Wintergreen (a few drops)

Stir flour and salt into water, add soap and food coloring or powdered paint. A few drops of wintergreen will take away the flour smell. The "paint" will have a grainy texture.

Pic' A Paint And Paint A Pic'

Giving your child a bucket of water and a brush to "paint" the sidewalk is a great way to introduce the joy of painting.

Many toddlers enjoy the tactile (or feeling) experience of fingerpainting with a homemade mixture. Another fun activity is to lay paper in a shallow box and place paint dipped marbles in the box ... then shake, rattle, and roll!

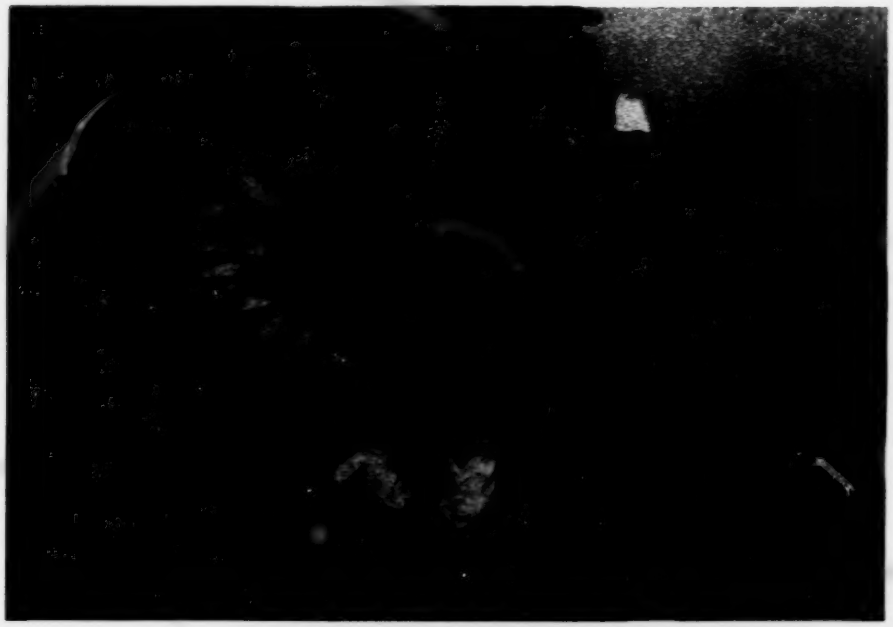
When your child is ready to use commercial paints, watercolors and tempera paints are available in most variety stores. While famous artists may have been restricted to the brush, you can try strings, sponges, leaves, and even FEET!

Paper Capers

Save junk mail, old magazines, wrapping paper, and other discarded paper products for your child to pile, sort, fold, and carry to every corner of the house in search of a "mailbox."

Your toddler may also enjoy crinkling, crumbling, crushing, and cramming scrap paper into various sized boxes and containers.

Find a special place to store old magazines so you can sit down with your child to turn the pages together look at the pictures and name objects. Cut out favorite pictures together and paste them in a special scrapbook. To encourage language, ask your child to tell you something about each picture and then write it down next to the picture.



Stringing Along With Me

A bead is not the only thing a child can string. Old curlers, empty spools, washers, buttons, macaroni and curtain rings are great for stringing.

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ings or yarn

Gath a bag of "th ngs with holes" and help your child m e a necklace, belt, anklet, or a mobile for his or room. Youngsters feel great when they can ma omethin o wear or share!

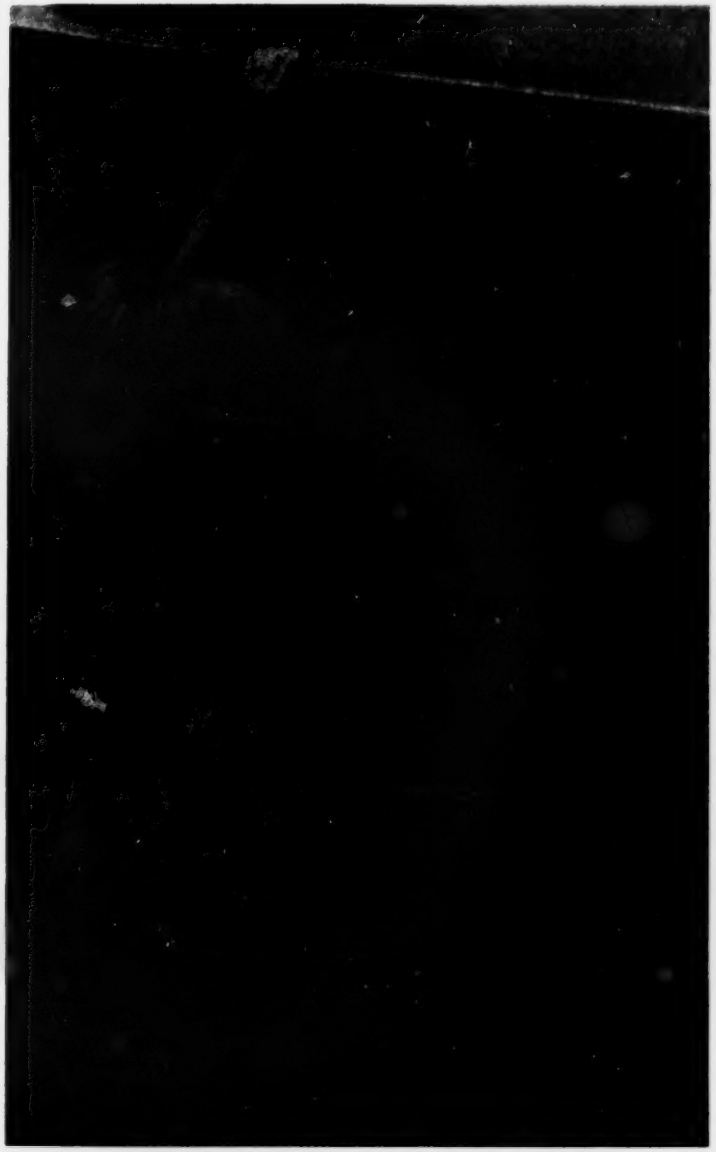
Color My World

Spontaneous scribbling, marking, and making random forms and designs are important steps in your child's development. Encourage this wonderful form of self-expression by providing crayons or markers and lots of paper.

A child creates a great deal of art work before drawings look like houses, people, or other familiar objects. Remember art does not have to be recognized as anything specific to be art ... it's the process, not the product that's important.

After a great deal of experimentation, your child may combine the shapes and lines to make what adults may recognize as a person.

"Look, I drew you!"

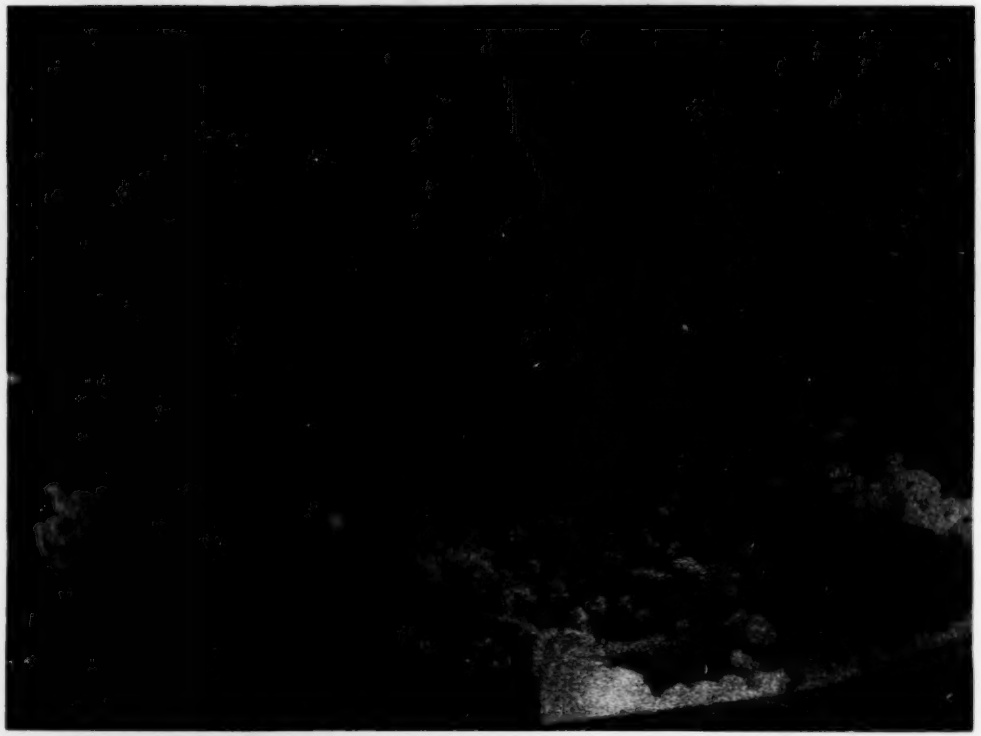


Feelies

Your child can learn a great deal about texture and form by handling a variety of materials.

Through their sense of touch, children learn to determine if an object is hard or soft, smooth or rough, or heavy or light. Ask your child if he or she likes feeling it. Soft and furry feathers, squishy mud, and bumpy corn all generate different responses.

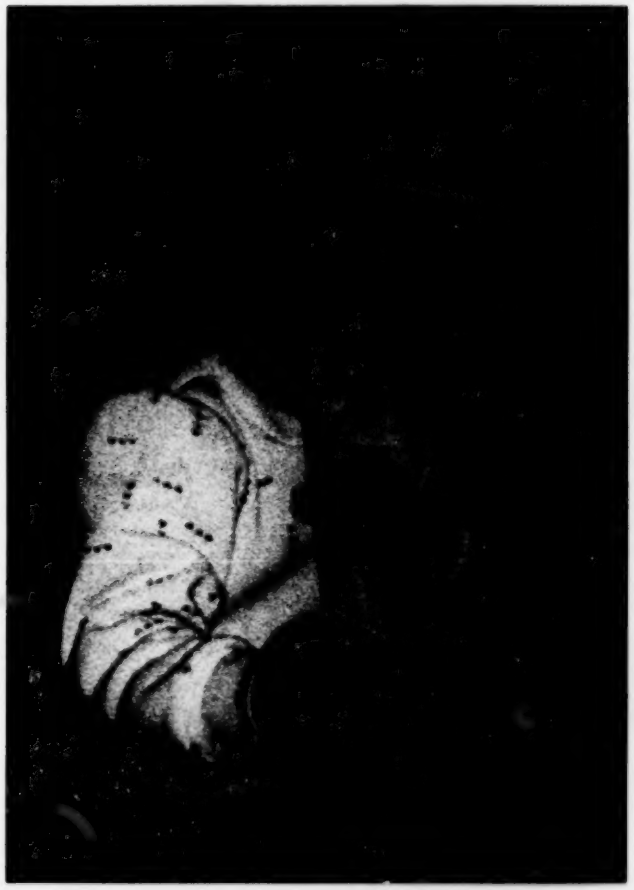
Can your child identify objects just by feeling them? Put a blindfold on your child and ask him or her to guess what the object is. Or, make a feelie box. Cut a hole in opposite sides of a medium-sized box and fill it with different objects. Place the box in front of your youngster so that he or she can reach but not see into it. Ask your child to feel and name the objects in the box ... then lift the box and see how many were identified!



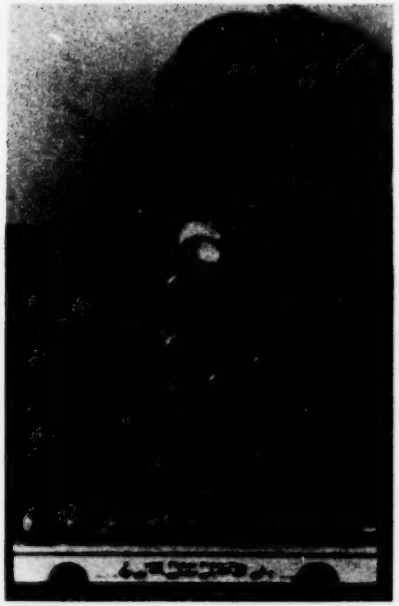
Walking barefoot in the grass, crushing egg shells, rubbing hand lotion, or smearing vegetable shortening in a cake pan are other sensory experiences that give your child more information about the world.

Rock, Roll, N' Romp

Many children first learn about music by hearing their mother's voice humming a lullaby or daddy singing the latest pop tune as they're rocked to sleep. The melodic tunes you sing about eyes, ears, toes, and fingers help your toddler begin identifying body parts. Other fingerplays and musical games like "London Bridges" and "Ring 'Round the Rosie" not only teach a variety of concepts but they're fun to act out with other people.



If your little one is in the mood to form a band, you can invent instruments with lots of things from the kitchen. A coffee can or oatmeal box makes a great drum and pie tins become loud cymbals. So, turn on the radio, wind up the music box, or put on a record and encourage your child to clap, sway, or even dance to the rhythm. Enjoy!



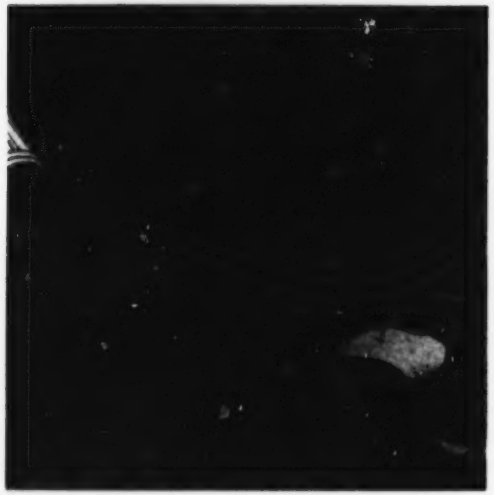
Uncooked Play Dough

2 cups flour (sifted)	1½ tablespoons cooking oil (add last)
½ cup salt	
½ cup water	Food coloring (optional)

Mix and knead all the ingredients together adding a bit more water if needed. Put in an air tight container and keep in refrigerator.

Pat-A-Cake

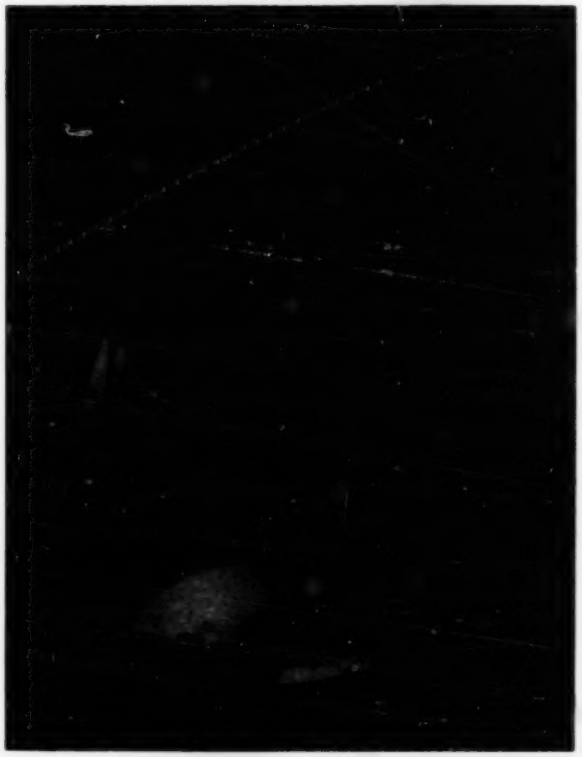
"Play dough" is dough to play with ... poke, pound, push and pull on. Encourage your child to use his or her hands to squeeze and let go. Show your toddler how to roll dough into different forms to create something special. Rolling pins, cookie cutters, pans, and other equipment from the kitchen items allow your child to pretend to bake just like mom or dad.



Splish-Splashin' Away

Summer days provide a great opportunity for you and your child to wade, splash, and cool off in a pool or at the beach. When that's not possible, the bathtub, a dishpan of water, or even the kitchen sink gives your child a place to pour, stir, dunk, float, fill, and measure ... or just get wet!

Plastic cups, bottles, funnels, sponges and other items that float are just a few things children enjoy playing with in the water. And you can always throw in a bar of soap for some good clean fun!



Sandscape

The wonderful thing about sand is what it can become. When dry, sand pours and sifts like flour, but after a rainfall it can be packed and shaped into a sandcastle.

Even very young children enjoy grabbing handfuls of sand and watching it slip through their fingers. Give your child a variety of utensils to play with in the sand and watch him or her make pies and cakes and other "sandy delicacies."

The sandbox is also a great place to make roads, mountains, and tunnels, or to dig for buried treasures. Hide something in the sand and encourage your child to search for and identify the object.

As you walk through a backyard, a vacant lot, or park talk to your child about what he or she sees and hears. Take time to feel the rough bark of a tree or smell the aroma of a flower. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer. All this will help your child pay more attention to the wonders of nature. Take a sack lunch along and, after the picnic, use the empty sack to gather seeds, leaves, and other items that can be taken home and pasted on a piece of cardboard or heavy paper.

Exploring The Great Outdoors

Oh, what great treasures the outdoors holds for your child:

frogs and flowers

berries and birds

ants and apples

The list is endless!

Setting The Stage For Play

YOUR CHILD

- Consider how your child is feeling when you suggest a play idea. If your child is excited, you may want to choose a quiet activity, such as coloring, puzzle play or sand play; if he or she is bored, you may want to chase bubbles or dress-up in old clothes.
- Keep in mind that when a child is not feeling well, he or she may want to return to the earlier stages of play or simply crawl into your lap and look at a book with you.
- Encourage your child's efforts rather than judge them; it's the "doing" that's most important to a child--not the finished product.
- Praise your child for trying, experimenting, and using imagination in play. (i.e., "You're such a clever boy" or "I'm so proud of you for trying")
- Encourage growth and variety. If your child seems to choose the same activity because it's successful and "safe," introduce new materials and activities that will also prove to be successful and expand on them.

PLAY AREA

- Provide enough space to do the activity and make sure the space is available for the length of time needed.
- Keep materials/toys in the same place so your child can find them. Vary the materials from time to time.
- Make sure the area is safe (no sharp corners to fall on), and where an adult can keep an eye on the activities.

PLAY MATERIALS

- Consider your child's interests and skill levels when selecting toys and materials. Let your child be a part of the selection process.

PLAY MATERIALS (Continued)

- Consider materials that can be used for more than one skill (i.e. colored blocks for the older child--for stacking, counting, and color recognition).
- Be sure the materials are safe and durable (no sharp edges, not small enough to swallow, and not easily broken).

TIME

- Provide adequate time to spend on an activity; allowing for set up, activity itself, and clean up.
- You may want to schedule a specific time each day or each week for "special play."

CLEAN UP

- Alert your child that playtime is almost over so he/she can finish the activity (i.e. "We'll be picking up soon, so finish what you're doing.").
- Praise your child for helping to put his/her toys away.
- Encourage your child to help clean the table after painting or fold the clothes after dress-up and put them away.
- If your child decides he/she is not ready to clean up, gently encourage your child and **KEEP CALM**. Giving your child a choice while cleaning up gives them the impression they are in control. Try this tactic: "Do you want to put the hat or the shoes away? Do you want to put the red beads or the green beads in the box first?"

ABOVE ALL HAVE FUN!